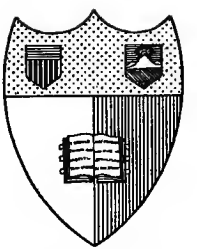
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Jocelyn

A Play and Thirty Verses

Charles William Brackett



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JOCELYN: A PLAY

JOCELYN

A Play and Thirty Verses

BY

CHARLES WILLIAM BRACKETT



BOSTON
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JOCELYN: A PLAY

Cast of Characters

John Dickson, *Caretaker of the ruin of Rossmar Castle.*
Mrs. Dickson, *his wife.*
Alice, *their little daughter.*
John, *their son.*
Jocelyn, *Mr. Dickson's daughter by his first wife.*
Justin Wilkinson, *a tourist.*
Mrs. Wilkinson, *his wife.*
Marian Wilkinson, *their daughter.*

Place, Rossmar Castle.
Time, the Present.

JOCELYN

Scene I

The stage represents the courtyard of an old castle which closes the back of the scene, its mossy gray walls against a clear blue sky. A little to the left of the centre there is a wide door, above it the faded traces of armorial bearings carved on the stone, to the left a circular tower the upper half of which has been broken or fallen away. On the left the stage can only be entered by a gate in an uneven wall which hangs open in an indolent, dilapidated way. The right of the stage is shut off with bushes, but toward the front there is a pool on which a few water lilies are dancing. The stage itself is a garden, but not such a garden as one might expect below an old castle; a cottage garden, with a row of high rose bushes crowded against the wall, just in full white bloom. There is a daring orange sunflower too, and a great cluster of larkspur, in front of them mignonette and daisies.

Inside the door of the castle one catches a glimpse of a very humble room, and Mrs. Dickson *sometimes passes across the line of vision, at her ironing. In an invalid's chair near the pool* Jocelyn *lies asleep, so placed that the audience cannot see her*

face, while her little half-sister ALICE *sits on the ground looking at her, her chin resting meditatively in her hands, her brother* JOHN *is near by, flat on his stomach, his feet swinging in the air, as he burrows aimlessly with a jack-knife. After a few moments spent in contemplating her sister,* ALICE *speaks.*

ALICE. Isn't she lovely there asleep, her face
So flowery fragile? See the place
Where the long lashes touch her cheek.
Do you suppose
I'll be as pretty ever?

As she is a very tousle-headed, round, little person with few pretences to pulchritude, her brother bursts into a roar of laughter at the question.

JOHN. Why your nose
Turns up like a cock when he drinks,
And you're all freckledy.

Exceedingly enraged by this somewhat tactless frankness, Alice falls upon her brother with intent to torture.

JOHN. Ow! you minx,
Don't pull my hair. You asked me, didn't you?
ALICE. You mean thing.
JOHN. Well, it's so.
ALICE. It isn't true.
JOHN. It is; don't be a silly.
ALICE. (*tearfully*) Anyway,

You n—needn't tell me so.

She weeps with the abandon of youthful rage. Her brother ignores her as long as his nerves hold out. Then at last:

JOHN. Oh, say
Ally, you're really not quite such a fright.

She weeps on unpacified. He tries another maneuvre.

JOHN. Did you hear 'em creep down the hall last night?

ALICE. Hear who?

JOHN. Hear them, the old ones.

ALICE. No, did you?

JOHN. Yes.

ALICE. (*glancing at Jocelyn*).
Will you tell her?

JOHN. No, I'm frightened to.
She's friends with them. Dad says it isn't good
To be friends with dead people. If she *should*—
Should go away with them—

ALICE. Don't. I'm afraid.
Let's run and play something.

JOHN. Let's wade.

ALICE. Oh, goody, yes.

JOHN. There's someone coming, look.
Down by the gate.

ALICE. Oh! Hurry.

JOHN. Beat you down the brook.

They pull off their stockings quickly, step into the pool and wade away.

They are hardly out of sight when three people appear at the gate. MR. and MRS. WILKINSON, *of whom no more needs be said than that they are tourists and deserving of the utmost stigma attaching to that term, and their daughter* MARIAN, *who though she is a tourist, shares none of the stigma but makes of touring an art—and a very graceful one. She comes in before the others, sees the courtyard and turns.*

MARIAN. Mamma, White roses! Oh, you dear, dear things,
How did you know you looked so lovely there? It brings
A sort of strange new beauty, just that trace
Of humbler sweetness to this stately place,
Beneath the crumbled splendor of that wall
A clump of cottage blossoms—

MR. W. (*impatiently*) Call,
Marian, see if there's not some sort of guide
To show us 'round—we haven't long.

MRS. W. Inside

There seems to be someone.

MR. WILKINSON *taps on the ground with his stick.* MRS. DICKSON, *who is frantically trying to take off her apron, calls,*

MRS. D. One moment, sir,
Just till I lay my iron by. Things are in such a stir.
I'm ironing and of course my man's away.

MR. W. How long'll it take to do the place?

MRS. W. Oh! What a day!
(*She sinks down on a bench.*)
I simply can't go farther; I'll stay here.
While you go on.

MARIAN. Then I'll stay with you, dear.

MR. W. Don't be absurd, child. Why, when people ask
How you like Rossmar, what'll you say?

MRS. W. This task
Of seeing things is killing me. You two
Go on. I'll wait; it's lovely here.

MARIAN. (*picking a spray of azure larkspur*)
What blue!
What color! it seems flaming everywhere.

MRS. D. I'd ask you in the house, but it's so hot in there.

MRS. W. That's very kind, I'm sure.

MR. W. Is all this old
Or just fixed up to look so?
MRS. D. (*bridling*) Why, it's told
The castle stood here these six hundred years.
The Staers
Have owned it three at least.
MARIAN. Who cares
How old it is? It's beautiful.
MRS. W. What's over there
Beside the pond, in the old cripple's chair?
MRS. D. That's Jocelyn, she's my husband's eldest, she's not strong
MRS. W. Is it contagious? Justin, we've been here too long
Already. Let's leave. Where's my bag?
MRS. D. Don't be afraid,
It isn't catching. She's a little maid
Born weakly like, but no disease.
She won't be here long. Jocelyn!
MARIAN. Please.
Don't wake her.
JOCELYN. I am awake; I only shut my eyes
To rest them.
MRS. W. Justin, I advise—
Justin, will you please listen! It's too late

To dawdle, you two go right on; I'll wait.

MRS. D. Jocelyn will tell you everything right here.

MARIAN. That certainly should please you, dear,
Sight-seeing, comfort, travel while you sit—
A la the movies.

MRS. W. I'd like seeing it
But my poor feet, you know.

MR. W. You've some ghosts, I suppose.

MARIAN. There are ghosts everywhere one goes,—
The phantoms of dead poets' minds: Shakespeare
Peopled all silent places; Guenevere,
Mallory's Guenevere, haunts every ancient room
Where once queens lived. The bloom
Of such great dreams never quite fades
Between the pillars of white colonnades;
Electra lingers still—Not ghosts
Of people dead, but those that long to be, white hosts
Of dreams. They haunt all places
With their dim forms and misty faces.

MR. W. When you've done rhapsodizing, let's be off.

MRS. W. (*to her husband*) Justin, come here! (*In a whisper*)

If I hear that girl cough,
I leave—she looks tubercular to me,
Notice her lashes.

MRS. D. This way please.

MARIAN. Just see
That panelling.

MRS. D. It's been time out of mind
Just as—(*their voices are heard no longer*)

MRS. W. Is there a legend of some kind
About the castle?

JOCELYN. Yes; there are quite a lot.

MRS. W. Well, could you tell me some. Oh, I forgot
You're ill. If you're too tired, don't say a word
But rest. And I'll pretend I've heard
Everything that you have to tell
When they come out.

JOCELYN. Oh, I'm quite well,
But you are good to think of me. I—I love
All the old stories, so I'll gladly tell you of—

MRS. W. Everything please.

JOCELYN. (*in the conventional manner pointing to the tower*)
This part, dad says,
Was built—

MRS. W. Not dates. My mind's a maze
Of dates and periods. Is there no
story of some sort,
The kind there should be, all about this
court
And that old tower?

JOCELYN. You hate them. Oh, I'm glad.
Dates are such sombre things.

MRS. W. It's quite as bad
As my expense account to keep them
straight.

JOCELYN. Well, once long, long ago—

MRS. W. (*with a kind of old-lady sentimentality.*) No, wait,
Say once upon a time.

JOCELYN. There was a lord of Rossmar who
Married a Lady Jocelyn—

MRS. W. But that's your name too,
Isn't it?

JOCELYN. Yes, my mother had lived here
Since she was just a girl, the name was
—was very dear
To her, she had dreamed over it so long.
She died when I was born. She was
not strong.
They say that I am like her. When
she heard
Her baby was a girl, she said some
word

So very low they could not hear until they bent
Above her little faded smile. She meant
Or seemed to mean that they should name
Her baby Jocelyn. That is how it came
That I am called by such a lovely word; you see
It is the only gift that she could leave for me,
A word.

MRS. W. Poor child! If there is anything that I can do,—

JOCELYN. Oh, pardon me, I had almost forgotten you
And Lady Jocelyn's story. Did I say
That she was very fair in that old way
Of beauty, tall and straight,
With filmy, sunny hair, whose weight
Fell on her shoulders, as the dusty gold
Of pollen falls on lilies. It is told
She was so beautiful her husband did not dare
Take her to court.

MRS. W. But I should think that there
She would have shone.

JOCELYN. She would,—too much, he feared
The king was—was—kind of a Blue

Beard,
Too fond of pretty ladies, and—and he
Her husband—

MRS. W. He didn't trust her—Oh, I see,
With golden hair—I've known the sort,
And a blonde moral sense. She'd not have done at court.

JOCELYN. Oh, no, she wasn't like that, people say,
But good, not just great lady good—Each day
She used to ride the circuit of her lands
Seeing her people. Once she burned her hands
Saving a little girl whose pinafore
Had taken fire. She always bore
The scars of it on her white skin.
The people worshipped her. The Inn
Is called the Lady Jocelyn still. When the plague came,
She fought it with them as she had the flame,
Careless about herself. Oh, can't you see
How good she must have been, how carelessly
He must have judged her, for to him
She had a fault—her womanhood, being so fair and slim

And tender. He could not understand,
He wished a plaything fashioned to his hand,
Not a heart's comrade. Yet he put some trust in her
Or else he'd not have sent the prisoner.

MRS. W. What prisoner?

JOCELYN. Haven't I told you that one day
After her Lord had been some months away
At court, a cavalcade rode to the gate,
Bringing a letter in the form of state
From the Lord Rossmar—and a tall young man
Of whom the letter told. "My Lady," so it ran
"This youth has been entrusted to my care
By His Imperial Highness. An affair
(Of which you may know nothing), one of some import,
Makes it imperative he shall not be at court.
Shut him in some safe place and see
That he is guarded well." Ungraciously
The letter stopped, for that was all
He thought that she should know. A seneschal

He would have thought was worthy of more trust,
But she—she was a woman. For the dust
And grime she could not see the prisoner, whose name
Was given Richard Guerdonlais. But when he came
Later into her presence, her chaplain used to tell
How fright came to her eyes, how her fan fell
From the slim hand that stole up to her heart
And how she turned her face away. He played a part
Perhaps, if he had known her, for he drooped his eyes
Submissively, and said at last, when it seemed wise
Since she did not, that he should speak,
"I am your prisoner. No bonds are weak
With which your ladyship is pleased to bind."
Then she looked in his face, quite blind
It seemed, to any memories, and bowed
And answered, "I am very proud
So gallant a fine gentleman should stay

Under my care, Richard—"
"De Guerdonlais?
"Was it not so the letter said?" he asked
And then for the first time she smiled, but masked
The smile behind her fan, and bid her servants place
The prisoner in this tower, a pleasant place
And yet a safe one. From whose casement, duly barred
He could peer down into this inner yard
Which was her garden. Down whose prim clipped ways
She wandered every day, for many days,
Ignoring little notes that fluttered down,
Freighted with what? Gay gossip of the town?
Or love? Or fragrant memories? Who knows?
They lay unread, wept over by the rose
That happened to be fullest blown. A song
Would float down to her sometimes, but for long
At the first hearing of his voice she turned and fled
To her own panelled room.

MRS. W. (*disappointedly*) And is it said
She never saw him?

JOCELYN. After a wait
Of several months there galloped to the gate
A second cavalcade with a new letter that ran thus:
"The King has changed his mind, captives are dangerous,
Turn over to this messenger straightway
Your prisoner, Richard Guerdonlais."
The note and the man's face seemed to spell death
At once "Tomorrow," she said,—held her breath
Lest he, the messenger, had been forewarned;
He did not speak, it seemed he had not been, she turned
Less fearfully, "Tomorrow you will bring
The prisoner to my lord." The ring
She wore trembled against his lips; then she withdrew
To her own room. The whole day through
She waited—and I think she must have prayed

Until the night came, silent to her aid,
And must have trembled as she waited there.
At midnight through the castle everywhere
Was heard the sound of beating on the gate—
The lord of Rossmar had returned. He did not wait
When they admitted him, but asked which was the prisoner's cell—
They told him. He went instantly.

MRS. W. Well? Well?

JOCELYN. The prisoner was gone.

MRS. W. And she, go on!

JOCELYN. The Lady Jocelyn too was gone.
He never found them, though he tried and tried
All through his life.

MRS. W. I wonder if she died.
I want to know the end. Make up one. Do.
Say what came next.

JOCELYN. I can't, you see, it's true.

MRS. W. Oh, what an irritating thing the truth is. If you can
Make up one, I'll believe it.

MARIAN *runs from the house joyously.*

MARIAN. Mamma, see what I've found—a fan

And such a fan, all lace and ivory
Behind a swarthy tapestry
It has lain years, and just by chance
My fingers felt it there. A glance
Showed what it was, and father gave it me.

MR. W. It cost a pretty penny, too.

MARIAN. But see
The past itself speaks through such fragile things
As this, not through the chronicle that sings
A crashing battle psalm, but through some tiny bit of bravery
Fashioned of lace and silk, of coquetry
Itself. It speaks of gallants' plumes and cloaks of vair,
Of candlelight, white throats and dusky hair,
The sweep and song of satins and velours,
The laughter and the tears of old amours

MR. W. All this about a fan!

MARIAN. It isn't just a fan to me,
It is a symbol.

MRS. W. Let me see
It is quite charming.

MARIAN. I never felt that magic thing

the past
Until I took it in my hand. Just think, the last,
The very last who touched it, did it so long ago
She is just dust and echoes now.

MR. W. Oh, I don't know
Perhaps some tourist laid it down.

MRS. W. Justin!

MARIAN. There lingers
About its sticks the warmth of lovely fingers.

MR. W. How can you be so sure?

MRS. W. Justin, don't tease,
It's getting late, we'd best be going—

JOCELYN. Please
Please may I see the fan?

MRS. D. Jocelyn!

MARIAN. Of course you may.

She gives it to her. JOCELYN *takes it, spreads it out, puts it against her cheek very lightly.*

JOCELYN. It may have been her fan. Perhaps that day
She went away she left it there. Oh, speak,
You lovely thing, did your breath touch her cheek
So tenderly, so softly. Did you rest
Your ivory whiteness in her white young

breast?

MR. W. What are we waiting for?

MRS. W. Oh, Heaven knows.

JOCELYN. Once, after all the flowers had gone, a tardy rose
Came to the garden.

MR. W. Well, it's late, come, Marian.

MARIAN *holding out her hand to* JOCELYN.

MARIAN. I'm sorry.

JOCELYN. Oh, your lovely fan.
It has told me so many faded things.

MRS. D. Why, Jocelyn, it can't talk.

JOCELYN. No, for it sings.

MARIAN. Good-bye, the later Jocelyn

MRS. W. Shall I give her a tip?

MR. W. Of course. Don't put your finger to your lip,
Marian, these people all expect their fees.

MARIAN. Not this one, please don't, mother, please.

MR. W. All right.

MRS. W. (*graciously to* MRS. DICKSON)
It is well worth the trip from town.

MRS. D. I thank you, ma'am.

MR. W. A bit run down,
But paying still. Well, come on, both of you. Good day.

MRS. D. There's one thing about folks like him,

—they pay.

JOCELYN. The girl was oh! so pretty, wasn't she?

MRS. D. And dressed real stylish too,—that organdie
Would have been nice for you. They paid
Enough for that old fan to buy you wine.

JOCELYN. Oh, I'm afraid
I couldn't drink the wine.

MRS. D. Why, it ain't liquor, dear,
Not when you take it for your health.

JOCELYN. Dad won't be here
Tonight?

MRS. D. Not anyway till late.
He must have missed the train. Well, we won't wait
Till he comes back to go to bed. He can just knock
Until he wakes us up. It must be seven o'clock.
He can't get back now until twelve, at least.

JOCELYN. The shadow has come to the pool. Like a gray beast
Timid but thirsty. Do you hear the last wild bee?
(*She goes and kneels beside the pool, bending over it.*)

They are the weariest flowers, the water lilies, see
How their cool miser fingers close
About their slender gold—it seems the lily knows
Her sister stars will scatter shinier gold,
And so she hides her own.

MRS. D. Oh, you'll take cold
If you stay kneeling there.

MARIAN *comes to the gate.*

MARIAN. I came, I couldn't help but come to—to

MRS. D. You want your money back.

MARION *holds out the fan to* JOCELYN.

MARIAN. To give this you.

JOCELYN. The fan!—Her lovely fan!

MRS. D. Oh, Miss, I can't allow!

MARIAN. You cannot help it—for I've done it now.

JOCELYN. Oh, girl, what is your name.

MARIAN. An ugly one—just Marian.

JOCELYN. I want to try—

MARIAN. No, don't.

She turns at the gate and throws JOCELYN *a kiss.* JOCELYN *still kneeling with the fan in her hands, croons to herself.*

JOCELYN. Her fan—her fan.

Curtain.

Scene II

Inside the castle. The stage represents the hall at the foot of the tower staircase. There is a stove toward the back at the left, behind which the panelled walls have been whitewashed, still farther to the left a bench littered with tin kitchen utensils. A door leads off left to the sleeping rooms. On the extreme right at the back of the stage, is the entrance to the tower stair, a yawning space filled in former times with a door which has long since disappeared. Through this opening one can see the staircase winding up; but its uselessness is apparent, for the tower is fallen away so far that one can catch even from the interior of the room a fugitive glimpse of a space of sky stitched with stars. The right hand side of the room is filled with two great panels of exquisite old oak, and toward the front there is a door by which the room is reached from outside. A little to the left of the centre is a kitchen table on which is a lamp and two candlesticks, and Mrs. Dickson's *darning materials.* Mrs. Dickson *sits at the left of this table at work,* Jocelyn *at the right in her chair. The children are kneeling beside her. As the curtain rises,* Jocelyn *has just finished a story, there is a moment of expectancy on the part of the children, then they begin to plead.*

John. Just one more, Jocelyn.

Alice. Oh, yes. Please, just one.

JOHN. About the twisted dwarf.
ALICE. About the nun
With the red rose.
MRS. D. Not one. It's time for bed.
Send them off, Jocelyn.
JOCELYN. It's too late now, dears, instead
I'll tell you one tomorrow,—one quite new.
JOHN. With fighting in it?
JOCELYN. (*nodding her assent*). And a princess, too.
ALICE. It seems as if I just can't wait.
JOCELYN. You'll never know you're waiting.
MRS. D. And it's late
For Heaven's sake, be off.
ALICE. The princesses have
oh! such lovely names,
Blanchefleur and Elsinore.
JOCELYN. Like windy flames,
Aren't they?
ALICE. And Melisande and Guenevere.
MRS. D. How do you think 'em up?
JOCELYN. They're ones I hear.
Sometimes the visitors speak them.
MRS. D. Look, John has drooped his head
He's quite asleep.
JOHN. (*hearing his name.*) But I don't want to go to bed.

JOCELYN *takes his hand and little* ALICE'S, *who*

is murmuring very sleepily.

ALICE. Tomorrow is the loveliest Princess's name always, it seems.

JOCELYN. Perhaps you'll meet the Princess somewhere in your dreams.

She leads them out. MRS. D. *watches them placidly, then turns to her work again. As she looks over the stockings, she says,*

MRS. D. There never were such children to wear holes.
(*She takes up a pair.*)
Heels, those are John's. Alice kicks out the soles.
That's as it should be, a boy's heavy tread
Comes down more firmly, hers trips where she's led
And lighter like. (*Counting the remaining stockings.*)
Heavens, there's three more pairs!
Well, I can't finish.

Enter JOCELYN.

JOCELYN. I've heard their prayers,
And then I kissed them, blew the candle out,
And said the fairy light must go to sleep.

MRS. D. Without
Their crying! You're a hand with chil-

dren,

JOCELYN. Why,
I always say the things I think that I
Would like to have had said when I was little too.

MRS. D. I never said 'em. Well, I never knew,
I guess. (*She goes and puts her arm around Jocelyn*)
I'm sorry.

JOCELYN. Oh, you were good, so good,
And I am such a weakly thing. You knew I never could—
Could help you much. But aren't the things one wanted so
And never had just good because you know
Through them what others want?

MRS. D. I never wanted much
Excepting clothes and food and such.
And to hold up my head with decent folk
Of course I should have liked a handsome cloak
With jet—

JOCELYN. How strange, never to know desire!
Never to want till wanting grew a fire
That burned your soul. Why I would give my life for things
To wear and see and hold. For rings

And silken furs—things that you've just admired
I've wanted and I've had them too—yes all that I desired
Holding the longing close.

MRS. D. (*working sleepily has not heard her*).
I guess I'll put these things away
And go to bed myself. What did you say?

JOCELYN. Nothing—"nothing"—the frightened word
We say when we think someone's heard
The things we really mean.

MRS. D. I don't suppose
Your father'll come tonight. But Heaven only knows.
If he does, since you're near the door,
Will you just let him in.

JOCELYN. Of course, before
His knocking wakes the children.

MRS. D. I hope that we shan't hear
The haunts tonight.

JOCELYN. I always listen, dear,
But I have never heard them. I should be so glad
I know them all so well. Geoffrey, Conrad,
And that poor crippled Hugh.

MRS. D. That awful Hugh
It's him I'm scared of.

JOCELYN. Lady Jocelyn, too,
If I could hear her light step on the stairs—

MRS. D. Lord, Jocelyn, don't. Why, in my prayers
That's what I beg the Lord to spare me most.

JOCELYN. You'd be afraid! Her tender little ghost!
She never comes. I sit here in my chair
Just hoping.

MRS. D. I hear 'em everywhere
All through the castle. I don't see how you dare to stay
Here of all places where they say
She comes back every night to call to him
And he comes down the stair. And it's so dim
And dreadful. Don't you know the fear?

JOCELYN. The wind and all the stars are very near
And the dear Garden's just behind that wall.

MRS. D. (*nervously*)
Well—well—good night. If they

come, you might call,
Though I shan't answer. Still you'd best. Good night.

JOCELYN. Will you please light the taper?

MRS. D. What? A light?
Why, aren't you going to sleep?

JOCELYN. Please leave it here
Burning beside me.

MRS. D. Ah! So you *do* know the fear.

JOCELYN. No, not of them, and yet—I am afraid
I am afraid that I might die.

MRS. D. Why, little maid!

JOCELYN. Here in the darkness, I hate darkness so.
My soul would be afraid—afraid, I know.
It would be dreadful to meet Death afraid. To die
Choked with the blackness.

MRS. D. Oh, you've made me cry.
You won't die, little maid.

JOCELYN. Not long,
It won't be long.

MRS. D. Jocelyn!

JOCELYN. You are so strong
I seem to feel the life, here in your breast
In your strong arms. Life! that is best
Of all the gifts! and I have never known

it yet.

MRS. D. Good night. Don't think such thoughts. Don't fret.

JOCELYN. Good night.

(MRS. DICKSON *goes*)

It is a solemn thing to say
Even "Good night." Sleep is so far away
From everything we know, a kind of miracle, and yet
We have grown used to it, and so forget.
We have forgotten many miracles—waking and light
The miracles of silence and of song, the night
That blossoms like a great blue tree, in gold.
Yet that we see so often we stay cold
And do not wonder. Yet a few still keep
Their ancient strangeness. Death and dreams, not sleep.

(*She leans back wearily and closes her eyes; then opens them again.*)

Will you come back, in a sweet dream, girl of to-day
Who reached across the distance—young and gay
And beautiful, to touch my hand and

give me this
This gift of gifts.
(*She takes the fan from her dress and strokes it*)
How beautiful it is!
Made out of dreams.

She leans back in her chair, leaving the fan in her lap, her eyes close. In the intense stillness one can hear a restless breeze that has found its way into the castle, burdened with the murmurs of garments, with forgotten sighs, with all the mysterious little sounds that breezes treasure up for silent times and memory haunted places. Something rattles on the bench where the tin utensils were. Glancing toward the sound, one sees that the tins are no longer there; in their place is a cloak flung over a carved chest, on which gleams the thin shaft of a sword. The stove is gone, too, and the walls, instead of being roughly whitewashed, are hung with deep toned tapestries. JOCELYN *is not sitting in a cripple's chair, but in a high seat, and the candle beside her rests in a massive candelabrum on a huge table. Her humble clothes have changed to a long robe of green with a heavy golden girdle. Only the fan in her lap remains the same. Her hand slips from the arm of her chair and touches it. The snap of its opening seems to waken her, she rises, no touch of the old feebleness in her action. She walks up and down; one can see that she is troubled. She brushes across her forehead with the back of her hand. At last she*

speaks in the voice of one who is almost decided on a course.

JOCELYN. I do not dare, I am afraid,
My lord, what would you say?
That I—that I had played
The traitor. Or did you know this when you sent him.
And is it just a test?
And if I fail in this, what then? Is it not best
To fail when failure is the price of good? I am ashamed
That I should pause.

(*She starts toward the staircase, which is now hidden by a heavy door, but as she goes another thought seems to stop her.*)

Jocelyn of Rossmar named
A wanton. No! Oh, God of troubled hearts, show me the way. I know
It is not right that he should die. Long, long ago
In a lost time of sunlight, God, I saw
His heart as you must see men's hearts —no law
Blinding my eyes, only love lighting them. We were
So very young. You must have smiled —the stir
Of life was just a whisper in our ears,

and such a whisper—fair
And frail as a bird's song at sundown. Everywhere
We looked was youth and joy to be. And then—
Ah, God, can women know the hearts of men?
If so, I knew his heart. The wind crept frightenedly
Along the rose walk when he came to me
That night. We wore no masks that wild night of good-bye
And yet there was no sin. I think that I—
I might have sinned. His was the stronger soul
And so we parted—and I stole
Back to my father's house in tears. Honor, on your high shrine
We laid a sacrifice, his love and mine,
All beautiful and young, stained with the bitterness of tears
This we have given, given through the years.
I cannot sacrifice again. Not this—not this
Your empty name's not worth a life like his

(*She runs to the door of the tower unlocks it*

flings it open and calls)

Richard, Richard. Come, you must go away.
A letter's come from Rossmar. One more day
And it would be too late. Why don't you come?
I'll have a horse made ready. Are you dumb
That you don't answer? Won't you come to me?

The wind has risen. As she speaks these words, a gust blows out the thin flame of the candle, and the room is in total darkness.

JOCELYN. Make haste, make haste.

The frightened voice of little ALICE *cries,*

ALICE. The ghosts! Oh, Jocelyn!

Just then there is a thundering knock at the gate.

JOCELYN *screams* Hear! It's he,
Rossmar's returned. Richard, don't wait!
I love you so—Thank God. It's not too late.
Take the sword on that chest, and the cloak too, and this

(*She screams as though to a gate keeper*)

Don't let him in. Behind the tapestry there is

A swinging panel. Wait, wait! I used to know
The secret spring. There!

Little JOHN'S *voice,* Jocelyn, don't go!

ALICE. Don't go with them.

The beating on the door comes again.

JOCELYN *fiercely*:

JOCELYN. Listen! Just hear
Hear how he beats the door. It is the fear,
The fear that's on him. He don't trust us. Well,
He does well not to trust me. Hide!

There is a noise of someone falling. From the left comes a voice—MRS. DICKSON'S:

MRS. D. What fell?
What is the knocking at the door?

She comes in carrying a lamp. The tapestry and the rich furnishings are gone—it is the same hall transformed back to a hovel. Only the panel at the right of the stairs has swung away and before the opening lies JOCELYN'S *little crumpled figure.*

Little ALICE *is cowering against the wall;* JOHN *is kneeling behind the table.*

MRS. D. What's happened? Jocelyn, are you hurt?
Run, John, and let your father in.

JOCELYN. (*still half asleep.*) My skirt
Caught in the door—won't open.

MRS. D. You're asleep—
Wake up, dear.
JOCELYN. I'm very tired. Please may I keep
The light beside me.

JOHN *has opened the door and let* MR. DICKSON *in.*

MR. D. What happened? John, why didn't you
Or some one let me in. I'm chilled clear through.
It's gotten cold.

Little ALICE *stands staring at the opening from which the panel has slid away.*

ALICE. Where have they gone? Why did they go?
MRS. D. Who's gone? What are you talking of?
ALICE. Why, don't you know?
Didn't you see them? Didn't you see them stand
Just for a moment in that place? He held her hand
Against his lips and they were dressed like pictures. Why!
Why, there's his sword! You came and then they went—but I
I saw them.

MR. DICKINSON *realizes that something very strange has happened.*

MR. D. Is the child hurt?

JOCELYN. No,
Only I am a little tired. Dad, hold me.

He takes her in his arms. MRS. DICKSON *feels her pulse.*

MRS. D. It's very slow.

JOCELYN. Hold me up, father, toward the stars.

Her father stands at the foot of the broken stairway and holds her as high as he can.

JOCELYN. Wasn't it beautiful—the scars
Never quite left her hand, they were like roses
Always. One last bee—then the flower closes
Sleepily.

MRS. D. She's dying. It's the end.

JOCELYN. Yes, yes, you in the sky,
You broken lights of stars—lighten my soul—I do not want to die
Life is so beautiful. Father!

MR. D. Yes.

MRS. D. Yes, little maid.

JOCELYN. To die is—

Her voice has been frightened; suddenly it changes to almost a song.

—is beautiful. I'm not afraid.
The darkness—is—so—bright.

Her head droops back, her arms stiffen a little about her father's neck.

MRS. D. She is dead.

JOHN. She's gone with them, Dad, like you said.

MR. D. Her body was a little lamp and her soul flamed too high
And shattered it.

MRS. DICKSON goes *and smoothes out the blanket of the invalid's chair, then turns to her husband who still is holding the little body.*

MRS. D. Here, where she used to lie.

Together they put it very tenderly in the chair. Little ALICE *who is sobbing sees something on the floor and picks it up.*

ALICE. The lovely fan is broken.

JOHN *has gone to the open panel, he takes out the sword. He tries to talk about "something else" as children do when they suffer.*

JOHN. It's very heavy—see the rust.

ALICE. (*stoops down and peers in too.*)
Look, John, a golden girdle.

JOHN. And what else?

ALICE. Dust.

POEMS

THE NEW MUSE

In Praise of the Movies

Her shrine is a narrow darkened room,
A gleam of light through a powerful glass,
A speeding wheel and a smooth white screen
Where her pageants of shadows pass,—
Shadows, but filled with a fire of life,
Treading the measures she bids them dance
Mirth, Adventure, and Love, and Death,
The forms of a new Romance.

And though they are tawdry and dim at times,
Their robes but pitifully fine,
This muse can number more worshippers
Than all the haughtier nine,
This wonderful lady, this high Romance
Stepped down from the ivory hall
To give herself to the humble folk
For almost nothing at all.

To give herself—the best of herself,
Renouncing the gaud of that bright word Art
For a place in the temple of Everyday
And the shrine of the humble heart.
There she has found what the others have lost
Through the fault of the pride they have learned
through the years

The incense of honest laughter,
The grace of unquestioning tears.

Her watchers are one with the listeners
To Homer's stories of Troy,
And the ardor of Paris for Helen
Thrills through the butcher's boy.
At the sight of the frail fair picture girl
With her pale sweet face and her hair blown down,
And youth, his heart, bends low to kiss
The hem of her beauty's gown.

Then that freckled Miss with the leaf-brown eyes,
She knows, and however else could she hear
Of the magic of Juliet's moonlit face,
And the passion of Guenevere—
Of the great high pathos of sweet Jeanne d'Arc,
Of the Lady of Coventry:
She has passed through the gate of the land of the stars
All for a five cent fee.

She has left her world of the shop and town
Though the dust is still on her skirt,
And her heart is filled with the wonderment,
The age-old beautiful hurt,
And the cheap and tawdry fades unseen
While the beauty shines and gleams,
And the only dust that her spirit knows
Is the dust of the stars and of dreams.

Beside her a man, an old, old man
Has his wrinkled hands clasped over a cane,
And a vivid light in his time-dimmed eyes
As though he were young again,
As though he had youth and strength and love,
As though he were playing the picture play
For to him the shadowy mimic love
Shines with the glamor of yesterday.

To him that girl in the picture play
Is a sort of ghost of the girl he knew
In that wistful, miserable, thoughtless time
When the city held some of youth's magic too,
When even his grim old office desk
Was less of a task than a shrine,
Because when a star hangs over a pool,
The murkiest waters shine.

To him, to all of them sitting there,
The plays are a spirit's fire
For the burning to dust of the common things,
Pain and care and desire,
For a moment's loss in forgetfulness
Of the strife that each one strives,
For the merging of lives grown over-tired
Into young unwearied lives.

At last the pictures flicker out,
The audience sighs and rises,
And each man hides his self of dream
Under his old disguises,
But each returns to the trudging life
Of the little everyday,
With a soul that droops less wearily
For the glimpse of far away.

For there never comes to our high walled streets
Some wind that has known the plain,
That treasures still the sunny scent
It has caught from the miles of grain,
As it came on its careless trackless path
No wearier feet than the wind's could have trod,
But it breathes a word of the good in the world.
And the Peace in the heart of God.

So, though this muse has left the halls
For a cheap, sweet, mortal fame,
She has builded a holier temple
And lighted a shining flame:
She gives great gifts to her worshippers,
Merciful gifts without cease—
To the weary the gift of forgetfulness
To the troubled the gift of peace.

A LAMENT FOR GWETHALYN

A crumbling corridor wherein
  Grave waters seep
Treasures the Lady Gwethalyn
  And the long stillness of her sleep.

The spun late sunlight of her hair
  Frames between two straight folds her face
And an unrippled shroud of vair
  Hides all her miracle of grace.

Her slender hands that wrought so well,
  Enchanter potent each white hand,
Lie underneath a deeper spell
  Than Merlin in Broceliande.

And from them they have stripped her rings
  Her emeralds carven cabusson
Her rubies—all the shining things
  And they lie waxenly and wan.

The nuns who robed her for her fête
  Granted no bit of bravery—
It is not proudly one must wait
  That strange hour called eternity.

Yet sure she was not formed for this
To be so solemnly attired—
Desireful as Semiramis
Where are the beauties she desired?

I wonder can she quite forget—
She loved them so!—though lying there
No sultry opals heavy set
Caught in her bright Venetian hair?

No drowsy attars subtly pressed
From roses blown in far Shiraz
Upon the coarse cloth on her breast
In the strait resting place she has.

No gold of Ophir wraps her round
Nor woven silks from Samarcand
Only the youngest sister found
And hid one white rose in her hand.

She was so very young and vain
It seems they might have granted her
Some little gift of jewelled chain
Or little grace of myrrh.

For she was one, this Gwethalyn,
Who knew the garden at all hours
Who drank all living beauty in
Were it of song or dusk or flowers.

Why, I have sometimes seen her pale
  In a sheer wonder of delight
To see a flaunting peacock's tail
  Rose-window-like against the light.

And I have known her in her room
  Just for the joy of something fair
To wind all kind of forest-bloom
  In that bright auriflamme her hair.

Does it not then seem somehow strange
  That she who loved things earthly so
Should fall upon this sudden change
  And know not all she used to know?

CARNIVAL NIGHT

A Song to Aphrodite

We who have scorned you are done with the scorning;
We crawl to your fair white feet to night.
Morning may bring the gods of the morning;
These are your hours and your old delight.
Aphrodite, white bosomed and slender,
Coral and ivory carven slim,
It is to you that we make surrender
Never remembering Him.
Creed of the beautiful sensuous form,
Creed of the dancing soul that forgets,
Here, where desire is a blinding storm
That no man battles, that none regrets;
Here, in the blindness to aeons of morrows
After the lapse of the dragging years,
While the weary face of the Man of Sorrows,
Whose eyes peer dim, through a mist of tears,
Is forgotten before the light of your splendor,
The light of your careless, carnal face
We render you, what you would have us render
Youth's red lips, and youth's mad young grace.
We who have hearkened your voice—sensation,
Till our souls reel drunk with our pulses' beating.
This is our tribute—our adoration
This that we dance while the night is fleeting,
This we give for the gifts you have brought us,

This for the gifts of roses and wine,
This for Nepenthe, and Lethe and lotus—
We who are drugged with your anodyne.
We have made an end of the gods that we prayed to,
We have forgotten their pageantried numbers,
We, whose ancient passions once made you,
Wake you this night from your passionless slumbers,
Wake you with song and with dancing and fêting
Wine of the vineyard and garden's red bloom.
Ah, have you waited as we have been waiting
There in the dusk of your silent tomb?
We have been bowed to the Carpenter's Son,
Pressing our lips to his garment's hem,
Mammon, and Buddah—Ah, one by one
We have gilded our idols and shattered them.
Yet I think that none of them ever has died,
For the soul of man has a thousand creeds,
And the soul is not proud with the body's pride—
Our needs have sought them, our poor men's needs.
And each of the Gods has a shrine for man
Where his soul may bow as the moment slips,
Man's soul, whose freedom is greater than

The broken faith he swears with his lips.
So to-night it is not we have wakened you sleeping
But we have spoken your praise aloud;
Oh, we were weary of weeping, and weeping,
Our souls were weary of being bowed,
So we came to you—lover with weary lover,
For your long slim throat, and your blue veined
breast,
For the dusk where your slumbrous eyelids hover;
It is best, perhaps, in the end—it is best.

It is over—the night with its dazzle of faces—
It is grown as gray as the lips of the dead.
The dancers are gone from their shining places,
There is red on the floor—spilled wine's dull red.
There is only one girl of them all who lingers
Here in abandon's ruins—dumb,
Her rouged face hid by her frightened fingers—
The dawn of the Galilean is come.

UNREALIZED

They pass, the powerless dreams,
  Of things that never may be,
Pass into time as the weary streams
  That merge in the heart of a tideless sea,
Each a languid, regretful maiden,
  Frail as a lily's slender stem,
And the winds of the world are laden
  With the tears men shed for them.

Their sister dreams being strong,
  Have fashioned beautiful things
Out of men's hopeless passions song,
  Peace from the sorrowing hearts of kings;
But they—no blossom nor fruit nor bud
  Falls from their fragile hands, it seems,
Yet the thorns of the world are red with blood
  From the torn white feet of dreams.

MID-JUNE

The filmy Queen Ann's lace is bent,
That reared its fragile head so high,
Beneath the black and azure wings
Of a sombre butterfly,
And a summer scent is over the woods
And a new deep blue in the sky.

The dust has powdered all the heads
Of the buttercups and the grasses;
The clover yields its honeyed heart
To every bee that passes;
And the daisies wander over the hills
In trembling moon-white masses.

The Poppy's flowers are crumpled
Under the soft June rain;
But the Iris shines in the border,
And the lupines in the lane,
And the blossoms blown from the locust trees
Drift on the pool again.

AS WHEN A HUNGRY MAN DREAMETH

Last night I dreamed again. No strange new place,
No shadowed pleasance, no moon-drenched parterre,
Was, in my dream, the setting for your face,
But you knelt, with your loose bound, sunny hair
In your own little garden—as you used
Among the flowers you loved; heartsease
With tiny faces whimsically amused,
Poppies, and iris blooms, and peonies.
And while you worked, you sang, beneath your breath,
The notes of some forgotten, happy air.
But at your side an angel stood named Death,
An angel—yet you did not know him there.
I tried to say to you that he was near
Wearily, as in dreams one tries.
You—though my words seemed not to reach your ear—
Glanced up, with glad, sweet questioning eyes,
As one who hears but fails to understand.
And, since that stately form you did not see,
Smiling, you raised one grimy little hand,
Kissed it—and blew the kiss to me.

I woke. Outside were hurried feet,
The petty thunder of the city's dawn.
But from the murmur of that restless street
You, and your garden face,—were gone.

POTTER'S FIELDS

They are so sad, those level wind-swept places,
Under the sodden grass and rain-drenched bough,
That sameness that one sees in beggars' faces
Haunting their narrow houses now.

Some flowers—a few crushed handfuls here and there—
Wild blossoms, free to gather for the tearing,
And yet so few have even paused to care,
And all the rest gone past uncaring.

DE GYARDEN

Crocus, shinin' in de snow,
Tulips tryin' hard to blow,
O'l Miss Piny, blushin' red
Puttin' out her sturdy head
Like a bird dat's gwine to sing,—
Dat's de gyarden in de spring.

Rose o' Canterbury bells,
Clumps o' foxgloves, spicy smells,
Grassy paths between the beds
Overhung by lilies' heads,
Hollyhocks a-swingin' high,—
Dat's de gyarden in July.

Spots where yo' can see the ground,
Tufts o' greeny grass around,
Flauntin' chrysys, 'bout to die,
Wavin' to de yeah "good-bye,"—
Sometimes think it's best of all,
Is de gyarden in de fall.

TO CLEOPATRA

Did you thrid poppies in your hair,
That Caesar dreamed in your embrace?
Or was it that your face was fair?

That haunting memories lingering there
Your Lethe lips might quite efface,
Did you thrid poppies in your hair?

Or was there in the scented air
Of lotos fragrance just a trace?
Or was it that your face was fair?

That Antony forgot despair,
And in your kiss forgot disgrace,
Did you thrid poppies in your hair?

Ah, was it that your face was fair
That emperors loved your lips a space?
Or were there poppies in your hair,
And deep oblivion in your face?

THE WATCHER'S STORY

When they had gone, a long, long time she did not
stir;
Her weary breathing throbbing through the room
was all I heard.
The faint marked hollow cuddled close to her,
Where she had held her baby, grew all blurred—
It was so long. Once her thin hand wandered
across the shabby sheet
As though she had forgotten—then her eyes
When she remembered, looked quite colorless, yet
sweet;
And she turned from me, and her arms crept circle-
wise
About the little hollow space, and so I think she
fell asleep.
It grew quite dusk, then, just before the thin light
failed,
The caged canary I had brought ventured the lit-
tle happy "cheep";
He always trilled as prelude—and the cool notes
trailed
A little slippery song across the silence.
She sat up in bed
Quite suddenly, smiling her wistful twisted way
I had not hoped to see again. The red
Came back into her parted lips, that had so long
seemed gray.

And in her cheeks a febrile, wild-rose tint
Blossomed again—it seemed her eyes came from behind the cloud.
Hers was a Saint's frail vision-haunted face. The print
Of Mary pinned above the bed showed no such tender awe. Then half aloud
But only to herself, she said his name, his fine forbidden name,
And one hand loosed her hair so it fell all about her like a cloak
And her soul found some words, not gray with shame,
Like her long prayers to God—but when she spoke,
Her face was filled with such a miracle of light
It seemed the Saint had seen a great God's angel stand
Close to her humbleness. And so she died, that night,
Her fingers seeking for his worshipped hand.

TWILIGHT SONG

A frail little lady lives in our street
(*On the opposite side, two doors below*)
I never have chanced to see her face,
And her name I do not know,
But I know that her spirit inhabits the heights
Where the souls of the angels go.

For a violin is the voice of her soul,
And these summer nights when the air grows hot
Through my open windows I hear its songs
Whether I listen or not,
And the songs are songs I have heard in dreams
And only have half forgot.

A sorcery lies in the lady's hand,
For she can—when she wishes to play,
Build a shining path from the stifling town
To the meadows and far away
And some of the songs are of dreams to be
And some are of yesterday.

As she softly fingers her violin,
Its happiness sings in her ears,
For peace has a home in the lady's heart
And the ceasing of pain and of fears.
Yet I think, though none of the others know,
She has passed through a valley of tears.

For though the music is filled with peace,
The peace that her soul possesses,
One dreams of a hungering mother touch
On a tousel of baby tresses
And a hand that is bringing a song to life
But longing for other caresses.

Then, when the music trembles out,
The silence that steals through the gloom
Seems like the falling into dust
Of a fragile lily bloom,
And the dusk becomes a holier place
For the breath of that sweet perfume.

A frail little lady lives in our street
(*On the opposite side, two doors below*)
I never have chanced to see her face,
And her name I do not know,
But I know that her spirit inhabits the heights
Where the souls of the angels go.

THE DEPARTURE

Paris, August, 1914

Last night the sound of motors ceaselessly
Taking the troops away, a desolate monotony
Of leaving vehicles, that lasted the night through
Now it is morning, sunlight, and we too
Must go from Paris. Down our little street
Almost deserted save for some few neat
Busy Parisians walking worriedly,
Women mostly, and old, into the Champs Elysee.
Every tree
Is brown this year from the June snow, dribbling
brown leaves across
The sunny pavements. One is at a loss
To recognize this still and austere place
As Paris. No smart turnout, no gay face
Not a wild taxi. Then one sees, nailed up against
a tree, a sign,
All the old Paris in it. Just a line
Of people laughing recklessly, their heads
Flung back in glad abandon, greens and reds
And yellows in it, a bright lithograph
Catching a moment's wild half-drunken laugh
Flashing it in one's face, a glaring ruse
To hold the eyes. Written beneath is "On s' amuse
Follement au Magic City" posted there
In that deserted splendid thoroughfare

It seems the echo of a laugh, the laugher being dead
Quite horrible in the new stillness. We go on.
See far ahead
The great crowd of the breadline, restlessly
Waiting for food. We pass that, pause to see
Our sunny Paris once again, then plunge into
The anxious crowd before the Gare du Nord. Get through
Somehow and find our train, then as we wait
Think of that sign again, and how of late
The laughter of that magic city, Paris, has been stilled,
Surely one once found pleasure madly there, and one is filled
With an old, superstitious fear. Was it too madly without pause,
The laughing? Must the Magic City too, bend to old laws?
Must silence fall upon its gaiety? The train
Is moving out. Our thoughts do not go on
We have escaped the judgment—we are gone.

IN A BOUDOIR

A Villanelle of Vanities

Vanities, ivory and lace and gold,
Crystal boxes, vermilion within—
Jocelyn the beauty is growing old.

Powders and pencils of tints untold
Scents as alluring as whispered sin
Vanities, ivory and lace and gold.

Drops to light fires in her eyes grown cold
Rouge where the curve of her cheek is thin—
Jocelyn the beauty is growing old.

Rose silk hangings in fold on fold
Lend their glamour to Jocelyn's skin—
Vanities, ivory and lace and gold.

Jocelyn the beauty is growing old.
The delicate lines at her eyes and chin
Art cannot hide for time grows bold.
The lines are the threads that the Parcae spin.

THE HOME COMING

I did not know how it could be
But there I walked unweariedly
Behind the child who guided me.

The men lay in strange heaps around
Some dead and some who had not found
Such peace upon the battle ground.

There was one boy who called upon
God for a drink. I would have gone
Only the strange child led me on.

We left the field and took the road
No one to hinder us—I strode
As one unburdened of a load.

I walked as one to whom God gives
That ardor of the primitives,
The knowledge that he really lives.

And still we did not speak, we two,
Then the child turned and led me through
A little gateway that I knew.

Then it was I who ran ahead,
Leaving the dying and the dead,
Knowing how near we were, I sped.

I never found the path so long
Yet all the way was like a song
My footsteps beat out, firm and strong.

Then came the lighted window where
You liked to sit, and you were there
The lamplight on your sunny hair.

You were asleep, I think. Your eyes
Were fallen shut, night-lily-wise.
I paused. I could not realize

You were so near. I tapped the pane.
You did not hear. I knocked again,
Louder this time,—but quite in vain.

Then I grew frightened, for you were
So very still and would not stir.
I turned. 'Will you not waken her?'

I asked. The strange child raised his head,
His eyes were pitiful. He said,
"Did you not know that you are dead?"

THE PRISONER

In the house of Hate that is old, is prisoned Love
that is young;
Willow and wind and dusk are not more faint than
she,
And her soul is great with words unsaid and with
songs she has never sung,
And her lips that may not speak her heart sing
sometimes wistfully.

This is the song of Love that is young in the house
of Hate that is old—
The terrible house in the wood of the gnarled and
twisted trees,
Beneath whose wall is a pool under a scum of mold
That knows no moon's pale face, and no sun's ar-
gosies.

This is the song of love that leans from the wall of
the house of hate
As a wall-flower leans from a shadowed wall sun-
thirsty and stifled there,
That the hours may pass more speedily, for each
seems bound with the weight
Of the things that never may be, and that never were.

"My heart is like a bended bough—
Wealth weary weighed with orchard blow—
And none may pluck of it but thou
Who may not come—or know."

"Will not some wind unfreight the stem—
The blossoms hang so Lethe sweet—
And fling a fragrant drift of them
Lightly across thy wayward feet?"

But there comes no wind to the house of Hate for the trees crowd jealously;
No wind to tremble the lightest branch or to make the heaviest blossom sway.
They must hang until they wither and die of their own unseen maturity,
And he for whom the song is sung may never know the way.

A NIGHT THOUGHT AT SEA

Night and the fog, and the foghorn's bellowings
Keeping sleep off—and the old Titanic ghost,
And ashamed and unspoken questionings;
What year and what month and most
What time? Night of course like this,
Full of fog and cold, and the engines thrum
Repeating with metrical emphasis
"We are safe—we are safe." And that to come!
Was there music, some nervous sensuous air
Like this that our orchestra plays?
And what was the shock when it came, and where?
Was it all quite sudden, a kind of daze
Or slow and unutterably terrible?
The women—they lived; but the men—what of them?
Did they suffer anguish unspeakable?
Was it a hell of restraint to stem
The tide of desire for a chance to fight
To try for their lives—or was it quick
And proud, as sacrifice should be, and slight
Almost—in the greatness of things that were crowding thick.

The waves dishevelled hierarchies,
And under the muffled stars and the ravelled lace
of foam
Death—and the icy agonies—
What is that? Not the sea nor the foghorn's boom
Far away—do you hear? A voice, "All's well"
And the fog is settling—one need not chafe
And turn and seem so miserable
We are safe at least. *We* are safe.

AT A PLAY

Too many years beyond fourteen
Had marred the brow of Juliet;
Too often Romeo had been
Beneath strange balconies—and yet
There was a tragedy between
Their listless speeches of regret—
A tragedy quite unforeseen
By each outwearied marionette—
That poor and common tragedy
Tense purposes grown slack and loose,
Romance from whose wings every day
Has stripped their plumage heartlessly
And golden words through over-use
Transmuted into things of clay.

THE SANCTUARY

Outside the church the rush of the wind,
Now chant, now shriek, now wild fanfare,
Beaten against the pictured glass,
Swept in gusts by the wind, the rain
Quivering down in shadowy streams,
Distorting the forms on each painted pane;
Within, half drowned by the voice of the wind,
The voice of the priest in prayer.

TWO MEMORIES

Memories are woven of little things:
  Fragrance of Jacqueminot,
The wild-bird song a street girl sings.

Blown flowers of love's young burgeonings,
  Lost gardens swept with snow:
Memories are woven of little things.

Sweet echoing voice on youth's brave wings,
  Notes, memory-thridded, low:
The wild-bird song a street girl sings.

Frail white-moth hands unsmirched with rings,
  Fresh red flower lips aglow:
Memories are woven of little things.

The wild-bird song a street girl sings—
  Ah, close-barred gate named "Long Ago"!
Memories are woven of little things,
  Fragrance of Jacqueminot.

THE LITTLE HOUSE FORGOTTEN

Do you forget the house that you and I
Builded together, very small and straight,
And the twin poplars splendid quakerly
With silvered leaves—that sentinel the gate.

The gray walls where the starry clematis
Curls like white foam about the balconies
The tea things shining where the firelight is,
Have you forgotten all of these?

And your two swans Oswald and Vivian,
And "Munch" the rabbit in the tall sweet grass,
And our old gardener you nicknamed "Pan"
With goodies for the children when they pass,

And the good law we made that nothing new
Should creep into our house among our flowers
Except sometimes a book—but that these too
Should oftenest be old and friends of ours.

Do you forget the patient little house
That waits and knows it never may come true?
When you were gone among the poplars' boughs
There was a sound of sorrowing for you.

The two swans drooped their white patrician throats
And even Munch forgot to gnaw his grass,
And it was with a sound like broken notes
That those whom you had dreamed of saw you pass.

Why do you wait, for you it is not far,
And oh your old dreams miss you very much?
Shall we not go together where they are?
The very gate is hungry for your touch.

MARIE STUART'S MIRROR

Could I bring you the gift I would,
From a panelled chamber in Holyrood,
It would be a mirror to suit your mood.
Yes, the mirror of Marie Stuart there,
A shadow and silver misted glass,
Where frail ghosts, brave in satin and vair,
Seem to linger and laugh and pass.

Then when your glance, however fleet,
Fell in that memory haunted space,
Perhaps your pale cruel face might meet
Another cruel and worshipped face
In a dim kiss of sisterhood.
Could I bring you the gift I would,
From a panelled chamber in Holyrood.

ENCHANTMENT

Enchantress say what sorcery
  Conjures thy thought? So pale
    Thou art
A filmy web of subtlety
  Lies on thy beauty as a veil.
    Sweet-heart
Do you plot out some Arcady?

Some Arcady of punished wrong
  Or slight revenged, which planned of, sings
    Behind
Thy curtained eyes a song
  Of treacheries and torturings?
    Oh blind
Of spirit—yet so strong!

Just let me rest against thy knees
  And let thy fingers stroke a while
    My hair.
What while you tell the mysteries
  Beneath thy cool malicious smile,
    And stare
With Borgian eyes across the seas.

BRAVADO

She comes down the gilded, mirrored room
Through the crowded tables' revelry,
With an indolent languorous smile on her face,
And the grace of a wind-swept fleur de lys.
Her lips are as red as poppies are
In a poppy field where the sunlight lies,
Her skin is as white as the moon on the mist,
There's a careless passion a-dream in her eyes.

It is New Year's eve, there is holly, wine,
Crimson poinsettas, amber champagne;
Confetti and serpentine, flung through the air,
Drift down in a little gossamer rain.
She passes by with her studied laugh,
So debonair and so cavalier,
With the ghost of a dread hid deep in her heart
For the spectre she's fêting—another year.

WHEN YOU ARE GONE

They will go on—the things we knew,
Sunset and night and dawn.
The sky will change from blue to deeper blue,
The dandelions will blossom in the lawn,
Your lilac bush will bloom again for you,
When you are gone—are gone.

The stars will peer again down through the pine,
Your borders will be gay with ismene,
With bleeding-hearts and painted columbine,
And in a tangled filigree
The flowers will come to your clematis vine
But not for me—for me.

ASPECTA BELLI

I have not heard the fanfare or the shout
  The starry glory of the battle cries,
But I have seen the fear and pain and doubt
  Steal ghostlike to a woman's haunted eyes
And, all ashamed and pitiful, peer out.

I have not seen the flash of fighting where
  A tattered oriflamme floats red with blood,
But, sitting crumpled in Trafalgar Square
  Grey with new suffering, ancient motherhood
The poor unsculptured statue of despair.

I have not seen the proud and courtly side,
  The kingly passions, anger and desire,
But in a street a girl who walked beside
  Her tremulous, heroic, boyish squire
With tenderness too agonized for pride.

I know the splendid passions waken there
  The stars of war—but these I did not meet;
The little people feel but one—despair,
  And there is sorrowing in every street
And hunger and sad eyes are everywhere.

THE DANCING GIRL IN PRISON

The beast that was your passion stole in to me at dawn,
When wine and lust from fettered truth had loosed their golden net,
When glamour with its dusky cloak and scented hair was gone,
And looking in your face I knew that bitter thing regret.

Regret, as ever, came too late, and with it loathing came,
And that is why I hid my face with hands your kisses struggled through,
Then drew the little knife and struck, mad-blind with fear and shame,
And fled across the ashen dawn; because at last I knew.

She was a faded woman gowned in gray,
Seeming as little vivid as her gown.
In the dull background of the busy town
It seemed she walked alone a loveless way.

But once a careless word I chanced to say
Woke a far dreaming in her eyes' soft brown:
The past came back—the dreary mask was down,
And she was very beautiful that day.

She had that beauty that the sunlight has
When it falls softly on the withered grass,
Or some forgotten, ancient tomb,
Or that a tear has on a rouge-stained face,
Or that frail youth has in dark death's embrace,
Or red flowers in a convent room.

A SONG OF LADIES' NAMES

There are words that tread with a stately grace
Through the miry ways where men's words meet;
With the holiness of a saint's pale face
In the din and glare of a market street.

There are pitiful words—the helpless ones
Men freight with hope in their wistful songs;
Sad as regret in the eyes of nuns,
Fettered to earth with Time's great thongs.

But, of men's words, most fair are those
That shine with the gleaming of windy flames,
That breathe of the scent of the fallen rose;
The fragile music of ladies' names.

Elaine is a word like a fallen cloak
That treasures the moulding of slender shoulders,
And Eloise like the blown gray smoke
From a dust where passion smoulders.

Beatrice is a song's last note
Echoing faintly, lingering;
Thais the stain at a pheasant's throat;
Blanchefleur a fragrance at dusk, in spring.

Iseult and Deirdre and Guenevere
Whisper the splendor of vanished queens;
Vivian breathes of a haunted mere;
Circe of sorcery's dim demesnes.

Sappho, Poppea, and Melisande,
And Helen, whose scourge was strong men's lust—
The words are winds from a distant land;
Red roses blossomed from beauty's dust.

IN EXPLANATION

Eileen—The flower white hyacinth
Is cursed with a most alluring scent,
And your mouth was just the scarlet plinth
Fashioned for such a monument.

Across the pages of time the words were written at last:
The creature, come from the grime in the hidden depths of the past,
Had struggled up through the years, age climbing on what dead ages had known
And written at last in blood and tears the words—"Man has flown;
Man has aspired and bestirred him, no longer quite a thing of the clay
From the day when desire first spurred him—he has worked: and he flies today."
Was it not a thing to fulfill, a task to perform to have bended
The will of the winds to his will? And must the record be ended
With these words "Man flying has fought, as he fought in the days when he crawled.
Was all that the generations taught a legend that madmen scrawled?
And the work that inspired them a sinning, a prelude for other words,
The terrible words beginning "Man winged himself as the birds
And giving unto his body wings gave wings to the soul of the beast
And stained his godliest purposings with the mire of his worst and his least?"